

to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage.

S. 4

At the request of Mr. DORGAN, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 4, a bill to make the United States more secure by implementing unfinished recommendations of the 9/11 Commission to fight the war on terror more effectively, to improve homeland security, and for other purposes.

S. 10

At the request of Mr. CONRAD, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. KOHL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 10, a bill to reinstate the pay-as-you-go requirement and reduce budget deficits by strengthening budget enforcement and fiscal responsibility.

S. 43

At the request of Mr. ENSIGN, the names of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS), the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BOND) and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) were added as cosponsors of S. 43, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to preserve and protect Social Security benefits of American workers and to help ensure greater congressional oversight of the Social Security system by requiring that both Houses of Congress approve a totalization agreement before the agreement, giving foreign workers Social Security benefits, can go into effect.

S. 57

At the request of Mr. INOUE, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. AKAKA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 57, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

S. 65

At the request of Mr. INHOFE, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. ENSIGN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 65, a bill to modify the age-60 standard for certain pilots and for other purposes.

S. 85

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 85, a bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to clarify that territories and Indian tribes are eligible to receive grants for confronting the use of methamphetamine.

S. 87

At the request of Mr. VITTER, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 87, a bill to permit the cancellation of certain loans under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

S. 101

At the request of Mr. STEVENS, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms.

SNOWE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 101, a bill to update and reinvigorate universal service provided under the Communications Act of 1934.

S. 119

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the names of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. LANDRIEU) and the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD) were added as cosponsors of S. 119, a bill to prohibit profiteering and fraud relating to military action, relief, and reconstruction efforts, and for other purposes.

S. 136

At the request of Mr. ALLARD, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 136, a bill to expand the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium to include the Transportation Technology Center.

S. 170

At the request of Mr. ENSIGN, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. SUNUNU), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) were added as cosponsors of S. 170, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the excise tax on telephone and other communications services.

S. 190

At the request of Mrs. HUTCHISON, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VOINOVICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 190, a bill to provide a technical correction to the Pension Protection Act of 2006.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS—JANUARY 4, 2007

By Mr. KERRY (for himself, Ms. SNOWE, Ms. LANDRIEU, and Mr. VITTER):

S. 163. A bill to improve the disaster loan program of the Small Business Administration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, as we all know, there was a tremendous amount of criticism of the Federal Government's response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita last year. Things are better now and the region is slowly recovering. But, having just finished the 2006 hurricane season, and with the 2007 season a few months away, we must be sure that if we have another disaster, the Federal Government's response will be better this time around. Disaster response agencies have to be better organized, more efficient, and more responsive in order to avoid the problems, the delays, mismanagement, and the seeming incompetence that occurred in 2005.

Today, I am proud to be an original cosponsor of legislation to improve the disaster response of one agency that had a great deal of problems last year,

the Small Business Administration, SBA. This bill, the "Small Business Disaster Response and Loan Improvements Act" makes major improvements to the SBA's disaster response and provides them with essential tools to ensure that they are more efficient and better prepared for future disasters—big and small. I should also note that this bill is a result of intensive bipartisan work over the past couple of months and was introduced shortly before the 109th Congress adjourned as S. 4097. Unfortunately, there was no action on that bill so it must be reintroduced in the new Congress. I strongly believe though we can secure passage during this Congress as the bill is reflective of the priorities from Senators KERRY and SNOWE, respectively, Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Small Business Committee, as well as Senators LANDRIEU and VITTER. For my part, I have heard loud and clear from our impacted businesses that SBA reforms should be implemented as soon as possible. That is why in September, I sent a letter to the new SBA Administrator Steve Preston, expressing concerns on the lack of progress on SBA disaster reforms, which were included in S. 3778, the FY07 SBA Reauthorization bill reported out of the Senate Small Business Committee. In this letter, I requested his cooperation, along with our committee to pass this important legislation before Congress adjourns at the end of the year. The introduction of this bill today, shows the progress that the committee made since September on this issue. I hope that this spirit of bipartisanship continues into the 110th Congress and that I can continue to work with my colleagues on the Senate Small Business Committee to reform SBA.

This legislation offers new tools to enhance SBA's disaster assistance programs. In every disaster, the SBA Disaster Loan program is a lifeline for businesses and homeowners who want to rebuild their lives after a catastrophe. When Hurricane Katrina hit, our businesses and homeowners had to wait months for loan approvals. I do not know how many businesses we lost because help did not come in time. Because of the scale of this disaster, what these businesses needed was immediate, short-term assistance to hold them over until SBA was ready to process the tens of thousands of loan applications it received.

That is why this legislation provides the SBA Administrator with the ability to set up an expedited disaster assistance business loan program to make short-term, low-interest loans to keep them afloat. These loans will allow businesses to make payroll, begin making repairs, and address other immediate needs while they are awaiting insurance payouts or regular SBA disaster loans. However, I realize that every disaster is different and could range from a disaster on the scale of Hurricane Katrina or 9-11, to an ice storm or drought. This legislation

gives the SBA additional options and flexibility in the kinds of relief they can offer a community. When a tornado destroys 20 businesses in a small town in the Midwest, SBA can get the regular disaster program up and running fairly quickly. You may not need short-term loans in this instance. But if you know that SBA's resources would be overwhelmed by a storm—just as they were initially with Hurricane Katrina—these expedited business loans would be very helpful.

This legislation also would direct SBA to study ways to expedite disaster loans for those businesses in a disaster area that have a good, solid track record with the SBA or can provide vital recovery efforts. We had many businesses in the Gulf Coast that had paid off previous SBA loans, were major sources of employment in their communities, but had to wait months for decisions on their SBA disaster loan applications. I do not want to get rid of the SBA's current practice of reviewing applications on a first-come first-served basis, but there should be some mechanism in place for major disasters to get expedited loans out the door to specific businesses that has a positive record with SBA or those that could serve a vital role in the recovery efforts. Expedited loans would jumpstart impacted economies, get vital capital out to businesses, and retain essential jobs following future disasters.

This bill also makes an important modification to the collateral requirements for disaster loans. The SBA cannot disburse more than \$10,000 for an approved loan without showing collateral. This is to limit the loss to the SBA in the event that a loan defaults. However, this disbursement amount has not been increased since 1998 and these days, \$10,000 is not enough to get a business up and running. That is why this bill increases this collateral requirement to \$14,000 and gives the Administrator the ability to increase that amount, in the event of another large-scale disaster. I believe this is a reasonable and fiscally responsible increase, and at the same time gives the Administrator flexibility for future disasters which will inevitably occur.

As you may know, I pushed to get language in the last Hurricane Supplemental Appropriations bill in June 2006 to require SBA to develop a disaster plan and report to Congress on its contents by July 15, 2006. SBA provided this status report in July and I am pleased that, since then, SBA has been working on a comprehensive disaster response plan. That said, I believe that with the 2007 Atlantic hurricane season fast approaching, and other disasters possible before then, the SBA should be looking at additional ways to improve upon this plan. This legislation requires SBA to report to Congress, by March 15, 2007 on the current status of its response plan and to provide us with a snapshot of where they were with Hurricane Katrina and where they are now. The report also requests SBA

feedback on suggested improvements. These improvements include better incorporating State disaster assistance efforts into SBA's response, as well as better coordination with Federal response agencies like FEMA.

The Small Business Disaster Response and Loan Improvements Act will provide essential tools to make the SBA more proactive, flexible, and most important, more efficient during future disasters. Again, I look forward to working with both Senator SNOWE and Senator KERRY during this new session of Congress to ensure that the SBA has everything it needs to meet these goals.

I ask unanimous consent that a copy of my September 27, 2006 letter to SBA be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, September 27, 2006.

Hon. STEVEN C. PRESTON,
Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration, Washington, D.C.

DEAR ADMINISTRATOR PRESTON: Let me take this opportunity to again congratulate you on your confirmation as Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Your management experience and passion to serve will prove extremely helpful to you in this challenging position.

I write you today because as a member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, as well as senator from a state hit hard by both Hurricanes Katrina, and Rita. I believe it is my duty to ensure that we implement substantive changes to SBA's Disaster Assistance Program during this session of Congress.

The SBA's response to Katrina and Rita was too slow and lacking in urgency—threatening the very survival of our affected businesses. A year has passed since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, yet while Congress is currently acting on extensive reforms for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), there has been only incremental changes to SBA's Disaster Assistance Program. That is why I am pleased to learn that you have recently created the Accelerated Disaster Response Initiative to identify and help implement process improvements to enable the SBA to respond more quickly in assisting small businesses and homeowners in need of assistance after a disaster. I applaud these efforts and your leadership on this issue. But much more must be done to address the systemic problems that led to delays and inaction post-Katrina and Rita.

For our part, the Senate is also attempting to address the multiple problems that hampered SBA's ability to assist impacted Gulf Coast small businesses and homeowners. Under the leadership of the Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Senators Snowe and Kerry, the committee voted unanimously to approve S. 3778, the "Small Business Reauthorization and Improvements Act of 2006" and sent it to the full Senate for consideration. A copy of the bill is attached for your convenience. This bipartisan legislation reauthorizes SBA programs, and also of great importance to me and my constituents, makes essential reforms to SBA's Disaster Assistance Program. However, since S. 3778 was introduced on August 2, 2006, almost nine weeks ago, it has been blocked from consideration and the Committee is still waiting for budget information so that it may file its report on the bill. It is my un-

derstanding that the administration and SBA has several concerns about this bill in its current form.

I am very concerned at this apparent deadlock, a deadlock which threatens our bipartisan efforts to implement comprehensive SBA Disaster Assistance reforms before the end of the year. In particular, I believe that there must be SBA reforms in the following areas:

Short-Term Assistance: Following Katrina and Rita small businesses waited, on average, four to six months for approvals and disbursements on SBA Disaster Loans. In order to ensure the long-term survival of small businesses impacted by a catastrophic disaster, SBA needs to be in the business of short-term recovery—by providing either emergency bridge loans or grants.

Disaster Loan Process for Homeowners: While SBA's mission is to "aid, counsel, assist and protect, insofar as is possible, the interests of small business concerns" it also has the added responsibility of helping affected homeowners rebuild their housing post-disaster. Katrina and Rita resulted in record numbers of SBA Disaster Loan applications from homeowners, which strained SBA's existing resources and personnel. If the SBA must bear this responsibility, the agency should improve the process as well as possibly seek greater coordination and cooperation with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on disaster housing assistance.

Expedited Disaster Loans to Businesses: The SBA currently has no mechanism in place to expedite Disaster Loans to impacted businesses that are either a major source of employment or that can demonstrate a vital contribution to recovery efforts in the area, such as businesses who construct housing, provide building materials, or conduct debris removal. The SBA needs the ability to fast-track loans to these businesses, in order to jumpstart local economies and recovery efforts.

Economic Injury Disaster Loans: Although Katrina and Rita directly affected businesses along the Gulf Coast, additional businesses in the region, as well as the rest of the country, were economically impacted by the storms. The SBA must have the ability to provide nationwide, or perhaps regional, economic injury disaster loans to businesses which can demonstrate economic distress or disruption from a future major disaster.

Loss Verification and Loan Processing: Following the Gulf Coast hurricanes, the SBA struggled for months to hire enough staff to inspect losses and process loan applications. Although SBA now has trained reserves to handle such surges in demand, the SBA also needs the permanent authority to enter into agreements with qualified private lenders and credit unions to process Disaster Loans and provide loss verification services.

Administrator Preston, I was impressed by your expressed willingness to be a bridge between Congress and the White House. For the SBA to truly bring its disaster capabilities to the next level, I believe that it must work in concert with the Congress. Together, we must remove layers of bureaucracy and red tape, which, following Katrina and Rita, both overwhelmed and frustrated dedicated SBA employees and those affected by the hurricanes. We must also give the SBA new tools to ensure that problems that occurred post-Katrina and Rita never happen again.

Last month we marked the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, and now mark the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Rita. It is essential that we take action now to make substantive reforms to the SBA Disaster Assistance Program. We owe nothing less to our small businesses. I ask that you continue working with my office on this important issue and respond to our approach in

writing no later than October 31, 2006. This will help us develop a proposal which can address the concerns of the SBA as well as provide a better and more responsive SBA Disaster Assistance Program for our Small businesses.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this request.

Sincerely,

MARY L. LANDRIEU,
United States Senator.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. ALLARD (for himself and
Mr. SALAZAR):

S. 194. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1300 North Frontage Road West in Vail, Colorado, as the "Gerald R. Ford, Jr. Post Office Building"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, as my good friend and colleague from Colorado just mentioned, we are introducing S. 194 naming the post office in Vail, CO, after former President Gerald R. Ford. As this vote just showed, we are all aware that when Gerald Ford passed away last month, our country lost a great man. Much has been said recently about President Ford: How he selflessly came to the aid of this country in one of its most trying times, how he governed through his beliefs about what was the best decision for the Nation regardless of the personal consequences, and his lifelong pursuit of bipartisanship and debate.

The defining characteristic of President Ford was his ability to remain humble and a man of the people. As testimonies poured in across the Nation, we were reminded about how he played selflessly as center at the University of Michigan, worked as a busboy while attending law school, and often hosted barbecues for his neighbors at his home in Alexandria, VA, while serving as House minority leader.

President Ford's charm and likability were shown all over the country, but away from his home State and the microscope of Washington, DC, Gerald Ford and his family also touched Colorado. As a Congressman from Michigan, the Ford family visited Colorado to ski in 1968 and since then have remained a constant presence in that community. He skied there, he built a house in nearby Beaver Creek, and he hosted a golf tournament for 20 years.

Following President Ford's passing, more than 2,500 people gathered at the base of Vail Mountain to witness a touching tribute to the President that included 500 ski instructors and a torchlight parade on Vail's Golden Peak. In Vail, like many other communities, President Ford was regarded as a tremendous asset and a man who treated everyone as an equal. Several residents remarked that one would never know he was a former President.

As a lasting tribute to this tremendous man, I cannot think of a more ap-

propriate honor than to have Vail's post office bear the name of Gerald R. Ford, Jr. A post office is the point in every community that brings all people together, and there is no better way to symbolize the virtues President Ford demonstrated through his public and private life. I encourage the Senate to pass legislation entitled "Senate Bill 194" in recognition of President Ford and his contributions to Vail, CO.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in favor of a bill that will be introduced by Senator ALLARD and myself to name the post office in Vail, CO, after President Gerald R. Ford.

I call myself fortunate because I worked with President Ford. In our brief time together, it was obvious to me he was a man of honor, integrity, and courage.

Gerald Ford was a man who loved the State of Colorado, who loved its people and its culture. So it is a fitting tribute that the post office in his adopted town of Vail should bear his name.

President Ford led a remarkable life—remarkable not only for his great success but for the humility, dignity, and candor which were the hallmarks of his career. And what a career it was: from the University of Michigan to Yale Law School to service in the Navy to a leadership position in the U.S. Congress, and eventually, of course, to the Presidency of these United States, to say nothing of a long and productive post-Presidential career.

Of course, it is his time in the White House which people will remember most, and for good reason. It was President Ford who, through his leadership, brought the country together during a time of crisis. He was not only the right man at the right time for a very difficult job, he was a perfect man to deal with circumstances, the likes of which this country had never seen.

But I will remember President Ford not only for his good deeds in public office but for his unending commitment to justice and equality well after he left the White House behind. In 1999, when our shared alma mater, the University of Michigan, had its diversity policies challenged in court, President Ford wrote an op-ed piece in the New York Times about diversity, and he talked about an inclusive America which was essential to the future and the strength of the United States. In his op-ed piece, which was widely circulated, about which he and I spent time talking one day, he wrote the following:

Of all the triumphs that have marked this as America's century—breathtaking advances in science and technology, the democratization of wealth and dispersal of political powers in ways hardly imaginable in 1899—none is more inspiring, if incomplete, than our pursuit of racial justice.

President Ford bravely defended the University of Michigan's diversity program with the same elegance and bravery with which he confronted the tribulations of the Watergate era and, in the

process, left behind a legacy of tolerance and justice which will not soon be forgotten.

Of course, no tribute to President Ford would be complete without mention of his extraordinary family, particularly his wife, Betty, and as President Ford famously said:

I am indebted to no man, and only to one woman—to my dear wife.

Betty Ford's bravery and her candor has inspired millions upon millions of Americans, and we are grateful for her service, and we wish her and the Ford family the very best.

The people of Colorado thank Gerald Ford for his service, and we are proud to move forward in helping the post office in Vail, CO, bear his name.

By Mr. KERRY (for himself and
Mr. SALAZAR):

S. 196. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to deny Federal retirement benefits to individuals convicted of certain offenses, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today Senator SALAZAR and I are the Congressional Pension Accountability Act legislation to deny Federal pensions to Members of Congress who are convicted of white collar crime such as bribery. A similar provision passed the House of Representatives during the 109th Congress. I look forward to working with my colleagues to include this legislation in the ethics reform legislation to be considered by the Senate this week.

I strongly believe that all Members of Congress must be held to the highest ethical standards and those who violate the public trust must be held accountable for their actions. Last year, a series of scandals exposed Washington lobbyists and Members of Congress who used undue and improper influence to represent special interests in their dealings with the Federal Government.

In 2005, the now infamous Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff pleaded guilty to conspiracy, mail fraud and tax evasion charges in a plea agreement. The Justice Department is currently investigating his attempts to influence Federal Government policy in both Congress and the Executive Branch.

Last November, Representative Bob Ney resigned from the House of Representatives after pleading guilty to conspiracy and making false statements. In a plea agreement, former Representative Ney acknowledged taking trips, tickets, meals and campaign donations from Mr. Abramoff in return for taking official actions on behalf of Abramoff clients.

In March 2002, Representative Ney inserted an amendment in the Help America Vote Act to lift an existing Federal ban against commercial gaming by a Texas Native American tribal client of Abramoff. In return, Representative Ney received all-expense-paid and reduced-price trips to Scotland to play golf, a trip to New Orleans